



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **SIGNING OF REGIONAL GRANT AGREEMENT TO SUPPORT CAFTA-DR**

**SAN SALVADOR**— The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) reinforced its financial support for the Central America region through a regional grant agreement signed today with the General Secretariat of the Central American Integration System (SICA),.

The objective of the grant agreement is to support the Central American countries in the implementation of the Central America and Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) through the implementation of laws, policies, and regulations that promote trade and investment. The agreement also seeks to improve the management and conservation of critical trans-boundary watersheds; these watersheds are situated on both sides of national borderlines in areas bounded by a divide and drain ultimately to a particular watercourse.

The grant agreement, which will be implemented in a three-year period, is in line with USAID's objective "Economic Freedom: Open, Diversified Expanding Economies." The agreement will be carried out through sub-agreements with regional organizations and contractors to primarily benefit Central American countries, including Panama and the Dominican Republic.

During the signing ceremony, USAID Mission Director Mark Silverman emphasized SICA's commitment and cooperation to achieve the agreement objectives. Through this grant agreement, USAID has provided \$17.2 million for a \$69 million program, subject to allocation of funds by the U.S. Congress.

"We hope to work jointly with the System's regional organizations and the beneficiary countries in Central America and the Dominican Republic to successfully implement the activities under this agreement," said Silverman.

Moreover, Silverman formally announced the transfer of USAID's Central America and Mexico Regional Program to El Salvador. Until recently, the Regional Program was managed by USAID/Guatemala and channeled support through agreements with several regional SICA organizations and the ministries of Finance, Labor, and Agriculture in the region. This new agreement will allow the integration of activities under a single agreement in order to facilitate its management and implementation.

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